

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the
Eastern District of Missouri

In the Matter of the Search of)
 the Priority Mail Express parcel bearing tracking number)
 EJ 226 747 612 US, addressed to: "Monica Cardenas,) Case No. 4:20 MJ 272 (DDN)
 P.O. Box 26274, El Paso TX 79926," with a return address)
 of "Lawrence Ward, 2211 Alberta ST., ST. Louis Mo) SUBMITTED TO THE COURT AND
 63118.") SIGNED BY RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS

APPLICATION FOR A SEARCH WARRANT

I, WAYNE HOUSE, a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government request a search warrant and state under penalty of perjury that I have reason to believe that on the following property: **the Priority Mail Express parcel bearing tracking number EJ 226 747 612 US, addressed to: "Monica Cardenas, P.O. Box 26274, El Paso TX 79926," with a return address of "Lawrence Ward, 2211 Alberta ST., ST. Louis Mo 63118,"**

located in the EASTERN District of MISSOURI, there is now concealed
 controlled substances and/or United States currency.

The basis for the search under Fed. R. Crim. P. 41(c) is *(check one or more)*:

- ☒ evidence of a crime;
- ☒ contraband, fruits of crime, or other items illegally possessed;
- ☒ property designed for use, intended for use, or used in committing a crime;
- ☐ a person to be arrested or a person who is unlawfully restrained.

The search is related to a violation of:

<i>Code Section</i>	<i>Offense Description</i>
Title 21, U.S.C., §§ 846, 841(a)(1)	Conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute controlled substance(s)

The application is based on these facts:

SEE ATTACHED AFFIDAVIT WHICH IS INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

- ☒ Continued on the attached sheet.
- ☐ Delayed notice of _____ days (give exact ending date if more than 30 days: _____) is requested under 18 U.S.C. § 3103a, the basis of which is set forth on the attached sheet.

I state under the penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.


 Wayne House, Postal Inspector
 United States Postal Inspection Service
Printed name and title

Sworn to, attested to, and affirmed before me via
 reliable electronic means pursuant to Federal Rules of
 Criminal Procedure 4.1 and 41.

Date: October 1, 2020

/s/ **David D. Noce**

Judge's signature

City and State: St. Louis, MO

David D. Noce, U.S. Magistrate Judge
Printed name and title

AUSA: PAUL D'AGROSA

AFFIDAVIT

I, Wayne House, being duly sworn, state the following:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am an Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) assigned to the St. Louis, MO domicile office and have been so employed since October 2019. I am currently assigned to the Contraband Interdiction and Investigation Team (CI2) focusing on illicit drug and illicit drug proceeds interdiction and investigations. Prior to my employment with USPIS, I was employed for over sixteen (16) years as a Special Agent (SA) with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in the St. Louis and Kansas City, MO field offices, as well as a two (2) year tour of duty at a Headquarters programmatic unit. Prior to my time with DHS / ICE / HSI, I served as a Police Officer in the City of Chesterfield, Missouri for five (5) years. Throughout my twenty-two (22) year law enforcement career, I have had extensive training, experience, and casework in drug interdiction and investigations.

2. Experience and drug trafficking intelligence information gathered by the USPIS have demonstrated that the U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail are frequently utilized by drug traffickers for shipping illicit drugs and/or proceeds/payments derived from illicit drug trafficking. Use of Express Mail and Priority Mail are favored because of the speed (Express Mail - overnight; Priority mail - two day delivery), reliability, free telephone and internet package tracking service, as well as the perceived minimal chance of detection. Express Mail was originally intended for urgent, business-to-business correspondence. Intelligence from prior packages, which were found to contain illicit drugs or proceeds/payments, has indicated that these labels are usually from an individual to an individual but Express Mail and Priority Mail are seldom used for individual to individual correspondence.

3. Information gathered by the USPIS has also demonstrated that other delivery couriers, such as Federal Express and United Parcel Service, are frequently utilized by drug traffickers for shipping illicit drugs or proceeds/payments. Information gathered by the USPIS has demonstrated that the services and delivery practices of Federal Express (FedEx) and United Parcel Service (UPS) are similar to U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail. Like U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail, Fed Ex and UPS are favored because of the speed, reliability, free telephone and internet package tracking service, as well as the perceived minimal

chance of detection. Like U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail, Fed Ex and UPS were originally intended for urgent, business-to-business mailings. However, intelligence from prior packages which were found to contain illicit drugs or proceeds/payments has indicated that these shipping labels are usually from an individual to an individual. Fed Ex and UPS are seldom utilized to convey individual-to-individual correspondence.

4. I am also aware from previous investigative experience and training that those engaged in the movement of illicit drugs through the U.S. mail or other parcel carrying and delivery services such as FedEx or UPS often use a network of available delivery “drop” addresses to vary delivery or sending locations and frequency, in an attempt to avoid law enforcement attention. These “drop” addresses may include true residences of co-conspirators, associates or relatives or may simply be vacant properties. Shipments of illicit drugs are often broken up into multiple parcels destined for the same or multiple addresses in further efforts to avoid detection. Though the sender information may be fictitious, illicit drugs proceeds parcels are often addressed to a true person and/or true address to ensure the receipt and security of bulk cash or monetary instrument mailings.

5. In an effort to combat the flow of illicit drugs or illicit drug proceeds through the overnight or two to three day delivery services, interdiction programs have been established in cities throughout the United States by the USPIS. These cities have been identified as known sources of, and destinations for, illicit drugs or illicit drug proceeds. The USPIS conducted an analysis of prior packages mailed through overnight and/or two to three day delivery services that contained controlled substances or proceeds/payments of controlled substance sales. The analysis of those prior packages indicated that these labels are usually from an individual to an individual. In the few cases when overnight, and or two to three day delivery service packages containing controlled substances or proceeds/payments have displayed a business or company name, it has usually proven to be a fictitious business or company, or the business listed is not associated with the mailer and was randomly selected by the mailer to deter law enforcement detection. In such instances, Postal Inspectors review available business records to verify the postage payment utilized by the mailer.

6. Most business mailings sent via USPS or through other private couriers reflect a pre-established postage meter or other various lines of credit to pay for the postage. Additionally, during the Silk Road investigation (dark web investigation that provided avenues to customers to

order narcotics via the internet) the USPIS learned that unknown persons posted intelligence on the Silk Road website warning would be drug mailers that most USPIS search warrant affidavits for illicit drug proceeds packages reflect mailing labels written as person-to-person and bore fictitious addressee and sender names. Due to the posting on the Silk Road Website, USPIS has noticed an increased number of packages utilizing valid sender and addressee names and or valid business names on illicit drug or illicit drug proceeds packages. Recent analysis has also shown that whether the mailer utilized a legitimate name/business on a mailing label or a fictitious name on the mailing label, cash payment for postage is the method of payment for most illicit drug or illicit drug proceeds parcels. USPIS analysis has established a series of characteristics which, when found in combination, have shown a high probability that the package will contain illicit drugs or the proceeds of illicit drug trafficking. Information collected by the USPIS has demonstrated that the presence of these characteristics is significant for delivery services, to include U.S. Postal Service Express Mail, U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail, Fed Ex and UPS. This profile includes the following characteristics: package mailed from or addressed to an illicit drug source city; package has a fictitious or misused return address; package addressee name is unknown at the destination address; package sender name is unknown at the return address; package has address information which is handwritten; package is mailed from a Commercial Mail Receiving Agency (CMRA); package is addressed to residential areas; package is addressed from an individual to an individual; packages are wrapped in brown paper and/or heavily taped; the sender paid cash for the postage and the ZIP Code from where the package is mailed is different than the ZIP Code used in the return address, and/or any other characteristic previously noted in this paragraph.

7. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service St. Louis Field Office's CI2 Team has found the characteristics listed in paragraphs three, four, five, and six are indicative of packages which have been found to contain illicit drugs or the proceeds/payments for the trafficking of illicit drugs.

8. This affidavit is submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause for the search warrant sought. I have not set forth each and every fact known to me concerning this investigation. I have included what I believe are facts sufficient for the present purpose. The information contained in this affidavit is based upon my personal knowledge and investigation, as well as information conveyed to me by other law enforcement agents and employees.

PROBABLE CAUSE

9. While conducting examinations of Priority Mail Express parcels at the St. Louis, MO Main Post Office (MPO) on September 29, 2020 your affiant observed parcel **EJ226747612US**, hereafter **SUBJECT PACKAGE**, with a handwritten label addressed to **“Monica Cardenas, P.O. Box 26274, El Paso TX 79926”** and sender information handwritten as **“Lawrence Ward, 2211 Alberta St., St. Louis Mo 63118.”** The label also displayed a sender phone number handwritten as **“314 312 5218.”**

10. **SUBJECT PACKAGE** is a Priority Mail Medium Flat Rate box measuring approximately eleven inches by eight and one-half inches by five and one-half inches (11” x 8.5” x 5.5”) and weighing approximately two (2) pounds, six (6) ounces as stated on the handwritten service label. The label also identified **SUBJECT PACKAGE** as being mailed from Zip Code 63104 at or around 1:25 pm at a cost of \$52.95.

11. Searches of open source databases available to USPIS and other law enforcement did not associate **“Lawrence Ward”** to **2211 Alberta St., St. Louis, MO 63118**. A broader search of **“Lawrence Ward”** in St. Louis, MO revealed it to be a common name associated to numerous individuals of varying ages but showed nothing to associate back to **2211 Alberta St., St. Louis, MO 63118**.

12. Searches of open source databases associated phone number **314-312-5218** to Larry Logan at 500 Meredocia St., Apt B, Madison, IL 62080. A search of “Larry Logan” and “Lawrence Logan” in St. Louis, MO revealed multiple individuals by that name at varying addresses and ages, but nothing that associated back to **2211 Alberta St., St. Louis, MO 63118**.

13. Searches of open sources databases revealed nothing to associate **“Monica Cardenas”** to **P.O. Box 26274, El Paso, TX 79926**. A broader search of **“Monica Cardenas”** in El Paso, Texas revealed it to be a common name associated to multiple individuals of varying ages, but nothing to associate to **P.O. Box 26274, El Paso, TX 79926**.

14. A review of USPS business records on September 30, 2020 revealed that the postage of \$52.95, reflected on the retail printed postage label displayed on **SUBJECT PACKAGE**, was paid in cash.

15. On September 30, 2020 your affiant made arrangements with St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department canine handler Detective Dave Wilson to present **SUBJECT PACKAGE** for canine review. Detective Wilson responded to the USPIS St. Louis field office

with his illicit drug detection canine, "Noco." **SUBJECT PACKAGE**, along with three other decoy parcels, were placed in an area of the USPIS St. Louis office not previously known to be contaminated with the presence of illicit drug odor. Detective Wilson advised that "Noco" alerted to **SUBJECT PACKAGE**, indicating the presence of an illicit drug odor that "Noco" is trained to detect.

16. Detective Wilson provided a copy of "Noco's" Qualifications Information certification which is attached to this affidavit as 'Attachment A' and incorporated herein by reference.

17. Based on my training and experience, as well as the training and experience of other members of the USPIS Saint Louis CI2 Team, I know that the size and weight of **SUBJECT PACKAGE**, coupled with other indicators (hand-written mailing label, cash payment for postage, fictitious or incongruent displayed sender and receiver information, mailing to a known source illicit drug city, and a positive reaction by an illicit drug trained canine), are indicative of other packages which have been found in the past to contain monies or monetary instruments which are the proceeds/payments of illicit drug trafficking.

18. From my training and experience as well as consultation with the United States Attorney's Office, I am aware that:

- a. Title 18 USC §1956 (a)(1)(A) makes it unlawful for any person to conduct a financial transaction which involves the proceeds of illicit drug distribution.
- b. Title 21 USC § 841 makes it unlawful for any person to knowingly or intentionally distribute or possess with the intent to distribute a controlled substance.
- c. Title 21 USC § 843 (b) makes it unlawful for any person knowingly or intentionally to use any mail (communication) facility in the distribution of illicit drugs.
- d. Title 21 USC § 846 makes it unlawful to attempts or conspires to commit the above acts.

(hereinafter **Subject Offenses**)

19. Given the facts and circumstances above, it is my belief that **SUBJECT PACKAGE** will contain illicit drug proceeds in violation of the **Subject Offenses**. Upon execution of the search warrant, I will provide the court with documentation of my findings.

20. **SUBJECT PACKAGE** is currently in the custody of USPIS in the Eastern District of Missouri. Attached herewith is a picture of the mailing labels for Priority Mail Express parcel

EJ226747612US as 'Attachment B.'

21. Because this investigation is ongoing and its success would be jeopardized if the contents of this affidavit were made public, Inspectors request that this affidavit and any accompanying warrant be sealed until further order of the Court.

I state under the penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



Wayne House
Inspector, U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Sworn to, attested to, and affirmed before me via reliable electronic means pursuant to Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 4.1 and 41 this 1st day of October, 2020.

/s/ David D. Noce

DAVID D. NOCE
United States Magistrate Judge
Eastern District of Missouri